

ICS-77-6236
25 March 1977

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MEMORANDUM FOR: [REDACTED]
Deputy to the DCI for the Intelligence Community

VIA: Mr. John N. McMahon
Associate Deputy to the DCI for the Intelligence
Community

FROM: [REDACTED]
Director, Office of Policy and Planning

SUBJECT: Presidential Intelligence Priorities

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1. On the occasion of his visit to the Headquarters Building, the President expressed his desire to play a role in establishing intelligence priorities and, in another context, observed that the current key intelligence questions did not reflect his own key intelligence questions. While the appropriate response to these Presidential concerns may well lie entirely within the close and continuous interaction which has developed between the DCI and the President, it seems appropriate to also consider whether some more formalized mechanism for responding to the President's expressed interest may be desirable.

2. One such possibility which we have considered is something which might be called a Presidential Intelligence Priorities List. Such a list would:

a. Be easy to establish and maintain, giving the frequent contacts taking place between the DCI and the President.

b. Give the President evidence of the importance being placed on his personal intelligence concerns.

c. Give the National Intelligence Officers a convenient means of focusing on the President's concerns, and assessing consumer satisfaction with intelligence being provided on such topics during their frequent interaction with high-level users of intelligence.

d. Provide some focus for assessing intelligence performance in conjunction with semi-annual reviews, particularly appropriate in that the reviews are done on behalf of the NSC which the President chairs.

e. Not interfere with other established mechanisms for developing and promulgating intelligence requirements and priorities.

3. Were such an initiative to be offered to the President, it could be developed along these lines:

a. A notional list would be reviewed and revised in coordination with the National Intelligence Officers and within the Community Staff.

b. The draft initial list would be provided to the DCI for discussion with the Secretaries of State and Defense, as he earlier indicated was his intention with regard to similar matters, and with the National Security Advisor to the President.

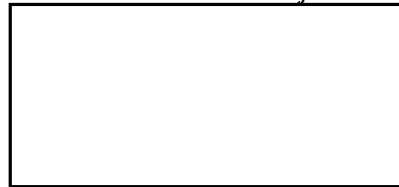
c. The proposal, with an initial list suitably revised and expanded with specific questions under each category, would be provided to the President.

d. If the President approved the proposal, the initial list would be disseminated, and the National Intelligence Officers and the Intelligence Community Staff would take necessary action to acquire and provide the intelligence indicated and to assess performance in doing so.

e. Subsequent changes to the list would come about as a result of Presidential guidance, or proposals to the President generated by the DCI or the National Security Advisor and approved by the President.

4. We have discussed such an initiative with the NIO office and with OPEI. Neither has any enthusiasm for the prospect. They express the view, which is reasonable enough, that the excellent rapport which the DCI enjoys with the President, and the professional judgment of the DCI as to how best to meet the President's intelligence needs (both those he expresses and those he has but may not necessarily realize or articulate) are both sufficient to guarantee satisfaction of those needs and preferable to a more institutionalized response.

5. Given these views, and apparent indications from the DCI at the most recent NIO meeting that he favors the "fine tuning" approach to involving the President in the establishment of priorities, we are not putting forth the idea of a Presidential Intelligence Priorities List as a recommendation at this time. I did want to make you aware of our interest in developing responses to the President's concerns, however. We will be discussing this initiative, as an example of one means of responding, at an upcoming meeting of the DCID 1/2 Ad Hoc Group, with the objective of stimulating discussion of other ideas which might prove useful in this area.



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